

Washington delegates view VA renovation project

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More than two years ago U.S. Rep. Ander Crenshaw was instrumental in keeping the Lake City VA medical center open.

Today, the facility continues to thrive and is in the midst of a renovation project after being removed from the CARES list of possible VA facility closures.

Monday, as Crenshaw and a delegation of business ambassadors from the Philippines toured the facility, he spoke of how much the VA has progressed during the two –year period and how the renovation will have an effect on other VA facilities in the area.

“You all are very important in the health care system,” Crenshaw said, as he addressed administrators and employees at the facility.

The VA is renovation two wards on the second and third floors to provide more in patient services. The additional beds will give relief to VA facilities in Orlando, Gainesville and Valdosta, Ga.

“Hopefully the construction will be complete in 18 months and we will increase our bed capacity by approximately 40 beds,” said Mary Kay Hollingsworth, North Florida/South Georgia Veterans System public affairs officer. “We still haven’t determined the exact use of those new beds but, we’re very excited with the expansion. We desperately need these beds because we stay full so often.”

Following his remarks, Crenshaw and the ambassadors toured the facility where during the briefing he learned the VA health care system has seen 1400 Iraqi and Afghanistan war veterans during the last year and it was considered as only being the beginning.

Frank M. Campbell, chief of facility manager at the VA, led the tour and told the congressman that the facility has added mental health professionals for troops returning from the War on Iraq, but they will need additional professionals.

Crenshaw and the ambassadors were also given information on the VA’s patient population and the employee workload.

“We’re very excited to have the congressman and the delegation from the Philippines come to the VA,” Hollingsworth said.